UNISON
the public service union

UNISON IN HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Newsletter for UNISON members

Summer 2014
Issue 1

Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of UNISON in Housing Associations the newsletter for everyone who works in the sector.

Working in a housing association, you are probably facing rising stress levels. You may be feeling that your managers aren't listening to you and you don't know what's going on.

Are you are struggling to do your job because of staff shortages and cuts? Are there more mergers and TUPE transfers in your workplace? With each restructuring more jobs are put at risk and pay and conditions are often cut. Meanwhile your bills never stop rising, but pay has fallen behind inflation. Many social care staff face pay cuts. But UNISON can help.

UNISON can help

We are the union housing association staff turn to – and we have tens of thousands of members like you. You could say we are your "essential cover" at work.

We campaign for decent treatment for all those who work to provide good housing and social care. We give you a voice for your concerns when we talk to your employer and we will always work to get the best deal for you that we can. And we offer employment assistance and representation for individual members at work when they need it.

How we helped

A care worker in a housing association, was pressured into working excessive hours at short notice while juggling her childcare commitments. She was devastated when she fell asleep on duty after working a particularly difficult week's rota, and was disciplined by her employer. Her UNISON rep talked her through the situation, gathered evidence in her defence, and showed that the employer had breached working time regulations. Not only did she win her case, but UNISON also got the employer to change how rotas are prepared, so all staff receive reasonable notification of shifts, and an end to favouritism by her manager.

Let's talk

Say hello to Ann Kerrigan and Peter Moss. They're your new local organisers. They will be visiting your workplace soon to talk about how UNISON can help you.

Ann and Peter are happy to talk to you at work, or outside of work if that's more convenient. Keep a look out for them, and please get in touch if you want to know more.

Contact Ann: **a.kerrigan@unison.co.uk**
07432 735 181

Contact Peter: **p.moss@unison.co.uk**
07432 735 157

Three simple ways to join UNISON today:

Join online at **joinunison.org**

Call us on **0800 171 2193**

Ask your UNISON rep for an application form

But did you also know that UNISON…

- has a helpline for members open until midnight
- provides legal advice on any issue for you and your family
- has a charity – There For You – that offers free debt advice and financial assistance, as well as advice on emotional difficulties – and even school uniform grants and well-being breaks
- offers discounts on insurance and shopping
- has our very own holiday centre for members, on the beach, in north Devon
- gets compensation for accidents and injuries at work?

Speaking out on your behalf

As the union for housing association staff, we campaign for proper investment in housing and social care. We speak out locally and nationally on your behalf. We speak regularly to national housing federations and other national trade bodies, politicians and other policy and decision-makers to put our members' point of view.

How we helped

UNISON has won regular pay increases for staff in many housing associations. But even in hard financial times we give you a voice to management. Recently, a member drew UNISON's attention to poor maternity leave provision in their housing association. UNISON showed management a comparison of maternity leave in similar organisations and explained how improving it would help retain committed staff and show they were a family friendly organisation. Maternity leave has now been increased and many staff benefit.

Why join a trade union?

Ordinary working people like you – nearly seven million in the UK – are in a trade union, doing all sorts of jobs. UNISON represents people who work in our vital public services and the not-for-profit sector, including housing associations, charities, and care providers.

Members benefit from the strength and security that comes from people working together to tackle problems, as well as individual support and benefits. Union members agree a common aim of what they want to achieve. This might be about pay or bullying at work or challenging unfairness. Representatives from the union gather evidence about the issue and discuss it with their employer to reach an agreement. If necessary, union members can broaden their campaign to win wider support inside the workplace, or with the public outside.

Get involved

All unions need their members to get involved – you are the union after all. But how much or how little you choose to do is up to you. Right now, more UNISON members in housing associations are getting active in the union.

If you volunteer to get involved and help your colleagues you will get training and support from our full-time staff. You will be linked into a wider network of other UNISON activists just like you and you can do as much or as little as you are comfortable with. Contact our organisers for more information.

In UNISON – we believe in:

Equality –
we are all different, but we all deserve to be treated with respect and fairness. All of our voices should be heard

Solidarity –
we work to support each other at work and in society

Democracy –
our members have a right to make the decisions that shape their union

Participation –
we aim to share our skills, commitment and creativity to build a stronger union.

UNISON
the public service union

Published and printed by UNISON, UNISON Centre, 130 Euston Road, London NW1 2AY. CU/June 2014/22339/NORTH/UNP 13481/1,000.